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DECEMBER 19, 2011

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A Chicago Tribune publication

American troops leave Iraq in their rear-view mirror *3*

North Korea's enigmatic leader Kim Jong Il dies *11*

No Cutler, still no wins: Bears drop 4th straight *12*

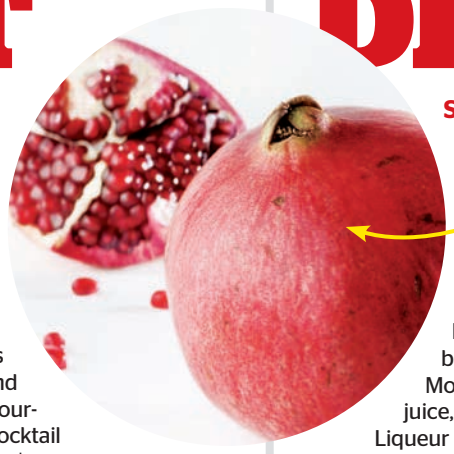
Andre Perez, who identifies as a man, changed his name in 2009. CHRIS SWEDA/TRIBUNE

GENDER vs. ANATOMY

They're comfortable with their identities—but are you? Transgender community fights for respect *pages 6-7*

BY RENEE MAILHIOT | METROMIX@TRIBUNE.COM » GET MORE EAT. DRINK. DO. IDEAS AT REDEYECHICAGO.COM

EAT



FELIZ NAVIDAD

Double A

108 W. Kinzie St.
312-329-9555

Get a taste of Mexican holiday cuisine at Spirited Dinners. Mercadito chef Patricio Sandoval teaches four traditional dishes, such as crispy octopus tortillas and marinated pork tacos. A four-course meal along with cocktail pairings is included. 6 p.m. $55. RSVP required.

MAZEL TOV

Eleaven Food Company

54 E. Ontario St. 312-202-0899

Celebrate the eight days of Hanukkah with this restaurant's special menu. Through Dec. 28, items such as potato latkes, coconut macaroons, jelly doughnuts and homemade blintzes are on the in-store menu. Options for catering and special orders are available too. 7 a.m. Prices vary.

DRINK

SHAKE YOUR POM-POMS

RA Sushi

1139 N. State St. 312-274-0011

Move aside, cranberries; pomegranates are on the menu this season. During December, a sashimi and cocktail combo is available. The Pomegranate Breeze, paired with a seared albacore tuna, contains Captain Morgan, POM pomegranate juice, PAMA Pomegranate Liqueur and pink grapefruit juice, among other citrus flavors. 11 a.m. $15.

BOOZE-Y BLISS

Stanley's Tap & Kitchen

1970 N. Lincoln Ave. 312-642-0007

Satisfy your sweet tooth and need for a drink at this Lincoln Park spot. While Stoli vodka lemonades are discounted today, be sure to try a spiked milkshake, also on special. The buzz is worth the brain freeze. 11 a.m. Prices vary.

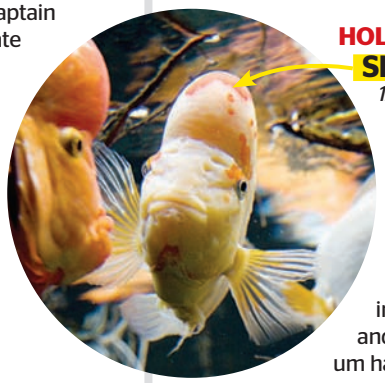
DO

TOTALLY '80S

Double Door

1572 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-489-3160

Layer on the leg warmers and neon spandex and tease your hair for Blue Monday. This monthly dance party is all about the '80s, so be prepared for Madonna and Prince hits blaring throughout the night. One complimentary Old Style is included with admission price. 9 p.m. $5.



HOLIDAY FISHING

Shedd Aquarium

1200 S. Lake Shore Drive
312-939-2438

Stray away from the usual post-work happy hour spot with Jingle Bell Rockin' Evenings. Every weekday until Dec. 30, get a glimpse of sea creatures at nightfall in all the exhibits and galleries and check out how the aquarium has decked its halls. Cocktails, cocoa and cookies are available for purchase. 5 p.m. $20.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS Christmas is in six days, so be on the lookout for celebrity Chicago natives, who should be arriving any day now.

A Chicago Tribune publication

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General Manager: Kurt Mueller *@kurtwmueller*

Editor: Tran Ha *@tranosaurus*

CONTACT US
Letter to the editor: redeye@tribune.com
Newsroom: 312-222-4970
Advertising: 312-222-2615
Classifieds: 312-222-2444
Home Delivery: 1-800-TRIBUNE
Circulation: redservice@tribune.com

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Members of the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Calvary, the last American troops to leave Iraq, cross the border into Kuwait on Sunday. The tactical road march signifies the end of the war in Iraq. LOS ANGELES TIMES

The fighting is over

U.S. troops make dramatic march out of Iraq to end war

> "All of them—our troops, veterans, and their families—will always have the thanks of a grateful nation."
> —**President Obama**, in his weekly radio address Saturday

CNN

Early Sunday, as the sun ascended to the winter sky, the last American convoy made its way down the main highway that connects Iraq and Kuwait.

The military called it its final "tactical road march." A series of 110 heavily armored, hulking trucks and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles carrying about 500 soldiers streamed slowly but steadily out of the combat zone.

A few minutes before 8 a.m., the metal gate behind the last MRAP closed. With it came to an end a deadly and divisive war that lasted almost nine years, its enormous cost calculated in blood and billions of dollars.

Some rushed to touch the gate, forever a symbol now of an emotional, landmark day. Some cheered with the Army's ultimate expression of affirmation: "Hooah!"

"It's hard to put words to it right now," Lt. Col. Jack Vantress said.

"It's a feeling of elation," he said, "to see what we've accomplished in the last eight and a half years and then to be part of the last movement out of Iraq."

The U.S. still will maintain a presence in Iraq: hundreds of nonmilitary personnel, including 1,700 diplomats, law enforcement officers, and economic, agricultural and other experts, according to the State Department. In addition, 5,000 security contractors will protect Americans and another 4,500 contractors will serve in other roles.

The quiet U.S. exit, shrouded in secrecy until it occurred, closes a war that was contentious from the start and cost the nation more than $800 billion.

President Obama, who had made a campaign promise to bring home American troops, reflected on a greater cost as Sunday's exit made good on his word.

According to the Defense Department, 4,487 service members were killed in the war. More than 30,000 were wounded. In all, 1.5 million Americans served their nation at war.

"All of them—our troops, veterans, and their families—will always have the thanks of a grateful nation," Obama said in his weekly radio address Saturday.

To war and back

The last U.S. troops in Iraq crossed the border into Kuwait on Sunday, marking the end of an almost nine-year war. Here are some key dates in the conflict. CNN

MARCH 20, 2003
President George W. Bush (left) says, "My fellow Americans, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger."

MAY 1, 2003
Standing under a banner that read "Mission Accomplished" aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, Bush declares that major combat operations in Iraq are over. The pronouncement later turns out to be premature.

Saddam Hussein
AP FILE PHOTO

DEC. 13, 2003
Coalition forces capture Saddam Hussein at the bottom of a ventilated "spider hole" 6 to 8 feet underground in Adwar.

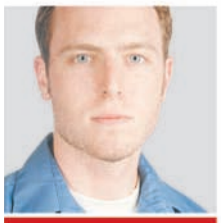
APRIL 28, 2004
Photographs from Abu Ghraib prison spark international outrage after they show detainees in degrading positions.

JANUARY 2007
Bush deploys 30,000 additional troops, a "surge" strategy designed to quell violence and restore security.

FEB. 27, 2009
President Obama approves a plan to withdraw roughly two-thirds of all U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of August 2010, with the remaining out of the country by the end of the following year.

DEC. 18, 2011
In a final tactical road march, the last U.S. troops in Iraq cross the border into Kuwait.

This is the new homophobia



Stephen Markley
» redeye@tribune.com

I was taken aback by a recent political ad from Texas Gov. Rick Perry, not just because the content is so vile and homophobic but because for years Perry has been dogged by rumors that he is gay.

I don't mean "gay" in the playground pejorative sense, I mean that he's had to fend off talk that he's a closeted homosexual. These unsubstantiated rumors have followed Perry since 2004, when he had to deny having a homosexual affair in an interview with the Austin American-Statesman. More recently this summer, Politico ran a story on the subject, comparing the perpetuation of those rumors to the fringe movement of the "birthers" who believe President Obama wasn't born in the U.S.

One might defend the Republican presidential candidate against such a smear campaign of unproven gossip—and until two weeks ago I would have agreed—but once you use the private sexual lives of other people as a tool to drum up votes, you open yourself up to the rest of us talking about what you do in the bedroom.

The anti-gay ad, in which he struts around a meadow in a Carhartt jacket (what an awesome cultural signifier of "real" America) and bemoans that something is wrong with this country when "gays can serve openly in our military, but our kids can't openly celebrate Christmas," may be the most brazenly homophobic ad by a national candidate ever.

Given how hateful and tasteless it is, anyone who thinks realistically about what fuels homophobia cannot help but raise an eyebrow. This is actually a good tip for you guys out there: Think about the most homophobic friend you have (because we all have them) and note his discomfort when the topic arises in conversation. If his reaction is bizarrely hateful, it's fair to speculate whether the dude has thought about what you look like naked.

Rick Perry

And given the tolerance my generation is slowly shaming our parents and grandparents into, you can now no longer toss around homophobic slurs. The code has changed to "stuff" like Perry's ad.

We are living through one of the fastest civil rights paradigm shifts in American history. To have gone from a majority anti-gay marriage country and a homophobic president ready to enact a constitutional amendment to ban marriage equality to that right being extended in multiple states, Obama ending "don't ask, don't tell" and a complete reversal in public support in just a few short years is remarkable.

So I don't feel bad for Rick Perry because of his continued fight against these rumors. I feel bad because someday his grandchildren will watch that ad.

REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR STEPHEN MARKLEY IS THE AUTHOR OF "PUBLISH THIS BOOK." REDEYECHICAGO.COM/MARKLEY

> "The anti-gay ad ... may be the most brazenly homophobic ad by a national candidate ever.

FIVE-DAY TRENDCAST

Nobody can predict the news, but we've got a pretty good idea what we'll be talking about this week.

MONDAY

Ready for some football?

It's not going to get the bad taste of the Bears' collapse out of your mouth, but Pittsburgh at San Francisco should be a fun game to watch.

TUESDAY

Double trouble

Happy Hanukkah! Common's "The Dreamer, The Believer" album and "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo" both drop today.

WEDNESDAY

Dare to watch?

It's the season finale of Golden Globe-nominated "American Horror Story" on FX. Nothing like the cold sweats to put you in the holiday spirit.

THURSDAY

Let it snow

Winter officially begins. Maybe something resembling winter weather also will begin. (Not that we're complaining.)

FRIDAY

Not 'Space Jam'

Ready to get in the mood? R. Kelly heads up the WGCI Big Jam at Allstate Arena, also featuring Young Jeezy.

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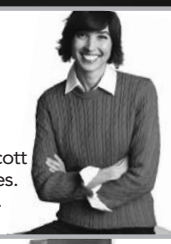
SPECIAL EXTRA 20% OFF
SWEATERS
15.68-20.48. Reg. $44-$64, after special 19.60-25.60. **Only at Macy's.** From Karen Scott & Charter Club. Misses & petites. Women's prices slightly higher.



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Reg. $64-$88, after special 44.80-61.60. **Only at Macy's.** Charter Club cashmere mufflers, cashmere-lined leather gloves and more.

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Reg. $70-$95, after special 49.99-59.99. **Only at Macy's.** Club Room cashmere mufflers and cashmere-lined leather gloves.

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THE BORN IDENTITY?

For some, gender identity isn't just a fight for rights, but also for public understanding

Nathan "Precious" Davis discovered in college that she is transgender.
CHRIS SWEDA/TRIBUNE PHOTOS

Chicago Tribune

Dan Carmichael had barely taken his first breath when a doctor announced his gender: "It's a girl."

That's where gender identity begins for most. A pronouncement at birth, a quick glance at the genitals revealing a person to be male or female.

If only it were that simple for Carmichael. He was raised a girl—then named Danielle Sosin—grew into a woman, served in the military during the Iraq War, yet never quite felt comfortable.

"I felt like an impostor," said Carmichael, now 33 and living as a man, the gender he always identified with. "But who do you become when you're not really sure who you are?"

Carmichael is part of a once-hidden demographic that now feels freer than ever to show itself, even while faced with widespread discrimination and misunderstanding of what it means to be "transgender."

Unlike gays and lesbians, who in some substantive ways have been assimilated into modern American culture, transgender people remain on the fringe, often stereotyped as "trannies" and sensationalized in movies and TV shows.

The recent appearance of Chaz Bono, a transgender man formerly known as Chastity Bono, on "Dancing With the Stars" caused an uproar among some conservative groups such as the American Family Association. And "Work It," a new ABC comedy that premieres Jan. 3, is being widely protested by transgender groups for its premise: A pair of men dress like women to get jobs.

Transgender activists have been on the front lines of the gay and lesbian civil rights movement since before the riots at New York City's Stonewall Inn in 1969, but only fairly recently has the transgender community felt empowered to speak up and demand recognition and rights of its own.

Across the country, legislative efforts are under way to make it easier for people to change the gender on their birth certificates and align identification documents—including driver's licenses and passports—with their gender identity. Many jails and prisons, including the Cook County Jail, have implemented rules to accommodate transgender inmates. And legal advocates agree that while gays and lesbians continue to fight for marriage and other rights, the next significant wave of legal action will involve transgender people.

On Dec. 6 in Georgia, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of a transgender woman who was fired from her state job in 2007 after telling her boss she planned to transition from male to female. In the court's ruling, Judge Rosemary Barkett wrote: "An individual cannot be punished because of his or her perceived gender non-conformity."

In October, the Illinois Department of Public Health, pressed by a lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union, said transgender Illinoisans could change the gender on their birth certificates without undergoing genital-reformation surgery.

"I think it has been a good year," said M. Dru Levasseur, transgender rights attorney for the national gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender legal rights group Lambda

FINDING THEMSELVES THREE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE TELL THEIR PERSONAL STORIES. TRIBUNE

'I felt this wholeness'

Nathaniel Davis grew up in Omaha, Neb., in a Pentecostal family. When he would sneak into his sister's closet and dress up in her clothes, or when he would act effeminate, his parents and the people in his church would repeatedly say to him: "You are not a girl. You are not a girl. You are not a girl."

"I was never given the choice," said Davis, who now goes by the name Nathan "Precious" Davis. "I hadn't even had a chance to realize my gender identity, it was just assigned to me. I remember weeping and crying and praying that God would change me and take away these feelings."

Despite the family pressure, Davis came out as a gay man in high school. But a gay and lesbian literature course during his sophomore year in college opened his eyes.

"I read about transgender people," Davis said. "I didn't even think that was possible. I read all these books and case studies and then I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm trans. I really am female. My gender identity is female.' "

She began dressing as a woman full time, and years of internal conflict seemed to wash away: "I felt this wholeness as a person. It was amazing. I was nervous, but I was happy. I suddenly felt like I could start living."

At one point, Davis tried taking hormones but didn't like the way they made her feel. She has done nothing to alter her body.

"Why should I do that when I feel like I'm beautiful just as I am?" she said.

'Uncomfortable in my own skin'

Candice Hart knew as early as age 4 that she shouldn't have been born a boy.

"It was evident to me that I was uncomfortable in my own skin," she said. "I knew that something was going on."

Born in the 1950s, there were no resources for Hart to turn to, and she feared her parents might have her institutionalized if she brought up her gender uncertainty.

"So I put my feelings in a vault," she said. "I met a woman, had children and went through representing myself as a man. But even when I was happy, I didn't feel whole."

Hart built a career as a director of public works in a northwest suburban community, but the nagging feelings of being an impostor only grew worse: "They were gnawing at me from the time I'd get up in the morning, it was all I'd think about. Until finally I said, 'I don't want to do this anymore.' "

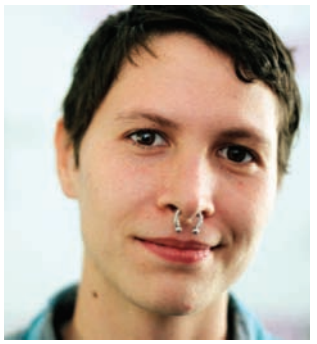
Hart began transitioning to female at age 49. Before long she was taking prescription hormones and working with a therapist who confirmed her suspicions—she is transgender.

Though divorced, Hart is close with her children and still in touch with her ex-wife. She has become an activist in the transgender community, chairing the group Illinois Gender Advocates and taking a graduate-level community counseling program at Argosy University.

"When I first began to live as I knew I should, I felt euphoric, and I still do," said Hart, now 61. "When I get up in the morning, I don't have to think who I am anymore."

'Overwhelmingly positive'

About four years ago, while in college in Vermont, **Andre Perez** began researching LGBT history and reading extensively about gender identity. Assigned female gender at birth, Perez had long felt he didn't fit in socially with women—when younger, he was considered a tomboy.



At 19, Perez realized why he had been questioning his gender identity.

"I met a lot of trans people and began spending more time with them," Perez said. "I found people who inspired me and I found a community that I finally connected with. One of the first people I met was a trans man, and he was the first person I could ever imagine growing up to be like."

In 2009, he formally changed his name to Andre Perez—he asked that his birth name not be used in this story—and started asking people to refer to him using male pronouns: "It felt more affirming to be called 'he' instead of 'she.' "

He takes testosterone to lower his voice and is recognized in day-to-day life as a man, though he says he's "more drawn to being recognized as gender-neutral." He dates people of all genders.

"My experience of being trans has had a pretty overwhelmingly positive impact on my life," said Perez, an activist and founder of the Trans Oral History Project. "My gender variance has brought me into a much larger community."

Q&A: TRANSGENDER

How many transgender people are there?
The National Center for Transgender Equality estimates that between 0.25 percent and 1 percent of the population is transgender, a range in line with estimates from sex researchers.

Is being transgender a mental illness?
Gender identity disorder is a psychiatric condition listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. However, most transgender people bristle at the thought of having their identity pathologized. There is a push in the transgender community to have gender identity disorder removed from the DSM.

What is a transvestite?
The term "transvestite" is considered offensive as it implies that a person wears opposite-sex clothing as a sexual fetish. The term "crossdresser" is more appropriate. Crossdressers are people who wear clothing associated with the opposite gender because it gives them a sense of fulfillment and allows them to express a part of their identity.

How do I know what pronoun to use with a transgender person?
Never make assumptions. If you aren't sure, ask the person which pronoun he or she prefers you use.

Is it OK to ask transgender people whether they have had surgical procedures done?
Never. Those are deeply personal decisions. Also, many transgender people don't feel they need surgery to be comfortable living in the gender they identify with. TRIBUNE

Legal. "I think the key thing—and it's very similar to the change that happened in the movement with gay and lesbian people—is that many people thought, 'Oh that's a choice, that's a lifestyle.' When people come to understand that this is who someone is, I think that's when they can really take it into their hearts."

Despite progress with civil rights, transgender people still face considerable discrimination in public and in the workplace. The effect of that is crystallized in a national study released earlier this year by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality.

The survey of more than 6,000 transgender and gender nonconforming people found that 41 percent of respondents had attempted suicide, compared with less than 2 percent in the general population.

For Carmichael, when he decided to transition and began living his life fully as a man, he at last felt right.

"I'm very comfortable being a trans man," he said. "I'm sort of reveling in the idea of finally being content."

Alice Dreger, professor of clinical medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, said this kind of outcome is common and demonstrates what it takes for a transgender person to find physical and psychological peace.

"People who are transgender do much better after they have the interventions they need," Dreger said. "The regret rate in sex-change procedures is very, very low."

chicago

MONDAY
44 31
The snow's

TUESDAY
40 38
not winning

WEDNESDAY
41 33
just yet ...

Commuters in a 5000 Series 'L' car on the Red Line
CHRIS SWEDA/TRIBUNE FILE

CTA pulls the brakes

52 cars—including 40 on Pink Line—will be sidelined until inspectors complete testing on flaws

Chicago Tribune

All of the CTA's new rail cars have been pulled from service as a safety precaution after inspections turned up multiple irregularities in the appearance of steel wheel components, transit officials said Friday.

The 52 cars delivered so far by Bombardier Transportation, including 40 that were in service on the Pink Line until Thursday night, will remain in rail yards and no new cars will be accepted until the issue is resolved, CTA spokeswoman Molly Sullivan said.

The flaws were detected by CTA inspectors at the Bombardier plant in Plattsburgh, N.Y., agency officials said.

The sidelining of the new rail cars, which were part of a more than $1 billion order for a 706-car fleet, marks the first major setback since the CTA received prototypes of the next-generation cars in 2010.

Sullivan said it isn't yet known whether the flaws, which were found in the castings used to make wheel bearing housings, would cause anything more serious than superficial blemishes.

The new trains were operating solely on the Pink Line and were to be phased in on the Green Line in February. The CTA's strategy is to introduce the cars on the least-busy lines first in order to minimize service disruptions if problems arise, officials said.

Irregularities in the quality of the castings first were observed by CTA inspectors last month at Bombardier's assembly plant, CTA officials said. The castings were replaced and no additional problems were detected until Tuesday, when CTA inspectors found a second quality issue with a casting at the manufacturing plant.

"CTA and Bombardier immediately began more inspections and discovered issues with other castings," the CTA said in a statement.

TEMPORARY SOLUTION

Until testing is completed, the new 5000 Series cars will be replaced by rail cars up to 42 years old, officials said. The switch-out of cars will not cause service disruptions unless the old cars, which had been destined for the salvage heap, malfunction.

"The parts are undergoing rigorous testing and while the testing is not complete, CTA decided as a precaution to take the 5000 Series cars out of service until more information is gathered," the statement said.

In addition to the 40 cars pulled from service, 12 cars that had been delivered also will undergo inspections, officials said, adding that all costs will be paid by Bombardier as part of the contract warranty.

Bombardier spokeswoman Maryanne Roberts said the company will present findings from its testing and inspection to the CTA "and together we will be able to determine if additional testing is required."

3 FOR ALL

DRUNKEN DRIVING DIGITS

Good news for safe drivers: The latest numbers show a drastic reduction in drunken driving in Illinois, according to figures from state police and the Illinois Department of Transportation. TRIBUNE

16%

That's how much drunken driving arrests fell between 2007 and 2010.

33%

That's how much fatalities from alcohol-related crashes fell between 2007 and 2010.

256

That's how many fatalities from alcohol-related crashes had been recorded this year through Wednesday, according to preliminary reports. That's less than half of what they were three years ago.

EXPRESS LINES

» Three police officers were injured Sunday morning after a man looking for a way home allegedly stole a taxi in the Gold Coast and then struck a police car as he was fleeing, police said.

» A federal judge Friday agreed to release former Bears receiver Sam Hurd on $100,000 cash bond, a day after he was charged with accepting a kilogram of cocaine from an undercover federal agent posing as a drug supplier.

» Illinois Sen. Mark Kirk will formally endorse Mitt Romney's bid for the GOP presidential nomination on Monday, sources close to the Republican said. TRIBUNE

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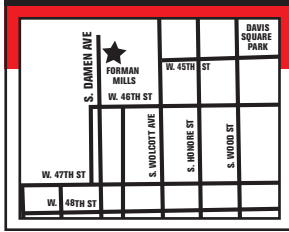

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Hundreds die in storm

1 Devastation from a tropical storm that deluged the southern Philippines mounted Sunday, with the death toll rising to 652, the Philippine Red Cross said. Hundreds are missing, the relief agency said, after entire villages were swept away. GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

Woman set ablaze

2 A 47-year-old man was arrested Sunday in the death of a 73-year-old woman who was doused with a flammable liquid and set on fire in the elevator of her Brooklyn apartment building, New York police said.

Drilling rig capsizes

3 At least four bodies have been found and 49 people are missing after an offshore drilling rig capsized in the Russian far east Sea of Okhotsk, the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry said Sunday.

Holiday driving gift

Gas prices in the U.S. fell more than 5 cents during the past two weeks as crude oil prices dropped, continuing a decline in pump prices that started in late October, according to a survey published Sunday.

English police criticized over riots

4 Police in London and some other English towns and cities failed to respond adequately to riots in August and must act more quickly if disorder happens again, a committee of lawmakers said.

KIM JONG IL DIES

5 **SEOUL** North Korea's longtime leader Kim Jong Il, the embodiment of the reclusive state where his cult of personality is deeply entrenched, has died, state TV reported. He was believed to be 69.

Regarded as one of the world's most repressive leaders, Kim Jong Il always cut a slightly bizarre figure. His diminutive stature and characteristically bouffant hair have been parodied by some in the West.

"He's a mysterious person—I think by design," said Han S. Park, director of the Center for the Study of Global Issues at the University of Georgia and a frequent visitor to North Korea. "Mystery is a source of leverage and power. It's maintaining uncertainty."

But for the citizens of his Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kim was the embodiment of the reclusive state, and well regarded.

His father, Kim Il Sung, founded North Korea with Soviet backing after World War II.

Kim Jong Il was a little boy when the Korean War broke out in 1950 when the Communist North invaded the American-backed South. After the fighting ended, Kim became steeped in his father's philosophy of "juche," or self-reliance—the basis of North Korea's reclusive nature. North and South Korea never signed a peace treaty and remain technically at war.

Kim Jong Il's younger brother drowned as a child and his mother died when he was 7. Shortly after, in 1950, the Korean War broke out and he was sent to Manchuria, returning three years later when it ended.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

On state TV early Monday, a tearful announcer dressed in black said Kim Jong Il had died on a train trip Saturday of physical and mental over-work on his way to give "field guidance." He had suffered a stroke in 2008 but appeared to have recovered.

Despite these hardships, Kim Jong Il presumably was surrounded by privilege for most of his upbringing. As the son of an iron-fisted dictator, "the doors were likely opening for him from a very young age," said Dae-sook Suh, a professor at the University of Hawaii who specializes in the Pyongyang government.

6 An Egyptian protester hides behind a piece of metal during clashes with riot police in Cairo on Sunday. It was the third straight day of violence that has left 10 people dead and damaged a world-famous historic library. GETTY IMAGES

THE DIGIT

$2,000

An anonymous donor dropped a diamond and sapphire ring worth $2,000 into a Salvation Army kettle in suburban Miami on Friday, the charity said on its Facebook page. The ring, tucked inside a $50 bill, was wrapped in a note that read: "They need more than I. Do good! A Friend."

bears

FINAL

Seattle 38 — Bears 14

FOUR SCORED

Every week before the Bears game, RedEye's sports crew gets to the point. Here's how they fared Sunday:

- ✓ **Julie DiCaro:** Seattle 17, Bears 3
- ✓ **Phil Thompson:** Seattle 21, Bears 13
- ✓ **Jimmy Greenfield:** Seattle 73, Marion Barber 0
- ☐ **Elliott Serrano:** Bears 14, Seattle 10

Caleb Hanie
The quarterback who nearly brought the Bears back from the dead in the NFC championship game against Green Bay in January has done nothing but hurt himself since taking over for the injured Jay Cutler this season. He's made bad decisions and even worse throws. Certainly—CERTAINLY—Bears management has learned the importance of a solid, proven backup quarterback. Right?
SCOTT STRAZZANTE/TRIBUNE PHOTOS

Roy Williams
Like Marion Barber, Williams is a former Cowboy—and he might be a former Bear soon too. Williams never meshed with the Bears offense, and his frequent dropped passes are too numerous to ignore. It's safe to say Cutler could not depend on him—and neither can the Bears. We'll drop Roy, thanks.

BLAME GAME

WITH THEIR PLAYOFF LIVES ON THE LINE, THE BEARS FALL FLAT. TIME TO POINT FINGERS?

NFC NORTH	W	L	GB
Green Bay	13	1	.929
Detroit	9	5	.643
BEARS	**7**	**7**	**.500**
Minnesota	2	12	.143

RedEye

Sorry, but even if the Bears still are technically in the playoff hunt, it's time to start thinking about 2012.

Sunday's 38-14 loss to Seattle at Soldier Field proved that this team, missing quarterback Jay Cutler and running back Matt Forte, has played its best football of the season.

"A total disappointment," coach Lovie Smith said afterward. "We had five turnovers. You can't win with five turnovers, simple as that. We never got anything going with our running game. ... It's tough when you're in that position."

Now, on to next season. What might change? Who might receive his walking papers? Even players under contract aren't safe in the NFL, where deals are not guaranteed like they are in other sports.

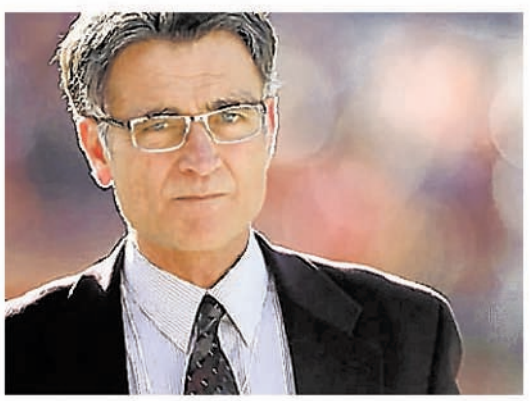
So with not much to look forward to this season, here are some Bears who might need to revert to backup plans for 2012. Get it, backup plans? Sorry.

WEEK 15

JACKSONVILLE	14	DALLAS	31	MIAMI	30	CAROLINA	28	TENNESSEE	13	GREEN BAY	14	NEW ORLEANS	42	WASHINGTON	23
ATLANTA	41	TAMPA BAY	15	BUFFALO	23	HOUSTON	13	INDIANAPOLIS	27	KANSAS CITY	19	MINNESOTA	20	N.Y. GIANTS	10

Marion Barber
Marion the Barbarian looked more like Marion the Librarian at times this season, and his game-altering failure to stay in bounds then fumbling in overtime at Denver on Dec. 11 might have destroyed any real chance he has at establishing himself in a Bears uniform. GETTY IMAGES PHOTO

Mike Martz
The offensive coordinator already has been linked to coaching jobs available in college, but he has denied the rumors. Maybe he should consider taking one after all. The play-calling of the offensive "genius" has been seriously suspect at times this season. For example, when Cutler went down, Forte should have been the focus of the offense. Instead, it seemed the Bears relied on the pass even more. And let's not forget all those zero-yardage screen passes.



Jerry Angelo
Ultimately, however, perhaps the man most responsible for the makeup of the 2011 Bears should take the fall. We're talking about general manager Jerry Angelo. Sure, he's responsible for bringing in studs like Julius Peppers, Cutler and Forte, but he's also the man who can't seem to figure out a way to build an offensive line to protect the quarterback or draft more than one or two decent players in a given decade. BRIAN CASSELLA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

Reinforcements?
RedEye
Call it the Jay Cutler effect.

Since the quarterback went down with a thumb injury Nov. 20 against San Diego, the Bears have lost four straight. It didn't help that running back Matt Forte went out Dec. 4 against Kansas City with a knee injury.

But even with the Bears on the brink of playoff elimination, don't expect those two back.

"When Jay is ready, when Matt Forte is ready, they'll play. We won't try to rush them," coach Lovie Smith said Sunday.

Smith said the Bears are not as bad as their recent record indicates.

"When you look back, we had some opportunities," he said. "... To go on a four-game losing streak, no, that wasn't a part of my mindset. We're better than that." TRIBUNE CONTRIBUTED

Surgery for Knox
Bears wide receiver Johnny Knox will undergo back surgery Monday to stabilize vertebrae in his back, the team announced. Knox was injured in the first quarter Sunday. A team spokesman said the "prognosis is good" for Knox's continued career and quality of life. TRIBUNE

This isn't the NFL we know

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY THIS WEEK IN THE NFL

Instant Replay
» redeyesports@tribune.com

It was one of those days in the NFL.

The Green Bay Packers, who looked so unbeatable the first 14 weeks of the season, suddenly looked average against unlikely giant slayer Kansas City. And who were two of the stars of the Chiefs' win? Ex-Bears Kyle Orton and Thomas Jones. That's gotta hurt, right, Bears fans?

And down Interstate 65 in Indianapolis, the Colts got their first win of the season by toppling Tennessee 27-13. The bad news for the Colts? The team confirmed quarterback Peyton Manning will not play this season, even after news leaked that he had practiced last week and wanted to suit up in 2011.

Yep, just another ordinary Sunday in the NFL.

OH YES!
Drew Brees
The New Orleans quarterback was outstanding, passing for five touchdowns and more than 400 yards in the Saints' 42-20 pasting of Minnesota.

OH NO!
Eli Manning
Speaking of Mannings. Peyton's younger brother Eli (left) turned in a terrible performance, throwing three interceptions and no touchdowns in the N.Y. Giants' loss to Rex Grossman-led Washington. That hurts too, right, Bears fans?

UH-OH
Mike Williams
Seattle wide receiver Mike Williams left Sunday's game against the Bears with an ankle injury. He had two catches before he exited.

CINCINNATI	20	DETROIT	28	CLEVELAND	17	NEW ENGLAND	41	N.Y. JETS	19	BALTIMORE	14
ST. LOUIS	13	OAKLAND	27	ARIZONA	20	DENVER	23	PHILADELPHIA	45	SAN DIEGO	34

MONDAY'S GAME
Pittsburgh at San Francisco
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LOVE HURTS

Which panelist is so good it hurts? Vote for the best by texting "**mon**" followed by the number next to your choice to **87708**.

Leo Ebersole
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Recovering Doritoholic
TEXT: 1

Ernest Wilkins
@REMIXchicago
Social media baron
TEXT: 2

Elliott Serrano
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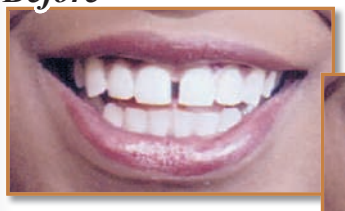
Geek specialist
TEXT: 3

Sarah Spain
@sarahspain
ESPN 1000
TEXT: 4

Marc Silverman
@waddle andsilvy
ESPN 1000
TEXT: 5

1 The Bears have had so many injuries this season ...	... players plan to off-season in the relative safety of Syria. Happy holidays, planet Earth!	... that I'm on the IR with a torn sense of pride in my team. SEATTLE?!?! REALLY?	... they just got dropped by their insurance carrier. Canadian socialized medicine, here we come.	... they're considering suiting up Staley.	... that it's time to turn to D-Rose and the Bulls ... and wait for the imminent Carlos Boozer injury.
2 Marshawn Lynch eats Skittles during games. What would a Bears player eat?	Good old-fashioned rock candy—at least that's what Sam Hurd told them they were eating.	The way they've been playing recently? Ho cakes.	Twinkies, considering they're a bunch of cream puffs.	Failburgers covered in failsauce.	Not sure what they eat, but Sam Hurd said they wash it down with Coke.
3 What's your must-have sports-related Christmas gift this year?	Kobe Bryant, a truckload of booze, an Internet-ordained minister and a really, really sharp divorce attorney.	Derrick Rose action figure. Has a billion moves and poses, but only one facial expression.	A Luvabull.	Is 61 Bulls wins too much to ask for?	A new Bears GM. Jerry Angelo must go. Please, Santa McCaskey?
4 How'd you do in your fantasy football playoffs Sunday?	I only talk about that with my therapist. She's also helping me with the whole Kobe Bryant divorce fantasy thing.	Lost to a guy who started Carson Palmer at QB. Read that again.	Insert Jim Mora "Playoffs?! Playoffs!?" sound bite here.	Lost in the first round. Thanks for rubbing it in.	Lost to a man named Paris. And Rex was my quarterback. That's my reality, and it sucks.
5 What does Richard Hamilton need to know about being a Chicago Bull?	1. Get open. 2. Patiently wait for D-Rose to get you the ball. 3. Hit the damn shot.	Not much, just how to make a 3 when the ball gets in his hands.	It's where ex-Pistons go to die.	When in doubt, clear out for Derrick.	Play like Rip of 2005, we'll cheer for you. Play like Rip of 2010, we'll rip you.

WINTER WHITE SMILES

Before

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RIVERS CASINO

MCT

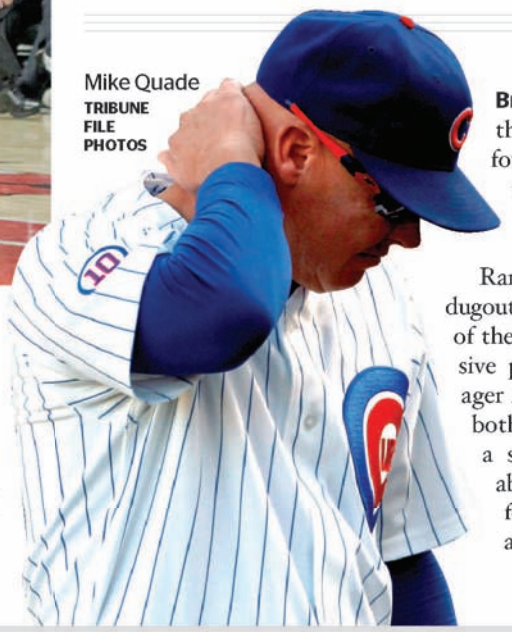
Heat 83, Bulls 80. Blowing a 12-point lead with 3:14 remaining would sting in any situation. Doing so to end your season stays with a team for a long time. The Bulls led the Heat 77-65 in Game 5 of the Eastern Conference finals May 26 before LeBron James and **Dwyane Wade** took over, silencing a stunned United Center crowd. A storybook season rarely ended with such a thud.

Canucks 2, Blackhawks 1. Game 7. After looking dead for the first three games of this first-round series, the Hawks looked like a miracle in the making. What's more, they had a power play to start overtime, and there was **Patrick Sharp** with the puck at the left post—and he shot a potentially historic puck into Roberto Luongo. And then Chris Campoli gave away the puck, and everything died.

Packers 21, Bears 14. The Bears' NFC championship loss to the Packers failed to live up to the hype and was the game most worth forgetting in Chicago due to disappointing play by **Jay Cutler**, the knee injury heard all over Twitter and slow-reacting public relations that made a bad situation worse.

BAD TICKETS

These were the worst of the worst showings in Chicago sports in 2011



Mike Quade
TRIBUNE FILE PHOTOS

Brewers 12, Cubs 5. In the first inning of the fourth game of spring training, Cubs pitcher Carlos Silva and third baseman Aramis Ramirez scuffled in the dugout over Silva's criticism of the team's shoddy defensive play. Afterward, manager Mike Quade absolved both, setting the tone for a season of unaccountability. The shoddy defensive play continued as well.

White Sox 2, Blue Jays 1. The door to the Sox manager's office was closed tight and the nameplate above it removed. The realization Ozzie Guillen was gone—permanently—produced an eerie quiet in the clubhouse. An era—one that ended an eight-decade championship drought—was really over. Lost in the funeral-like atmosphere was that **Adam Dunn** set the Sox's season strikeout record with 176.

DEC 19

BULLS ADVENT CALENDAR

The countdown has begun, Bulls fans. Today is Dec. 19; the Bulls open their season Dec. 25, so what better way to count down than with a Christmas-style Bulls advent calendar? **Today's gift:** A "C" and a "J" for backup guard C.J. Watson, the star of Friday's Bulls preseason win. See the video version of our advent calendar at **redeyesportsguy.tumblr.com/**.

THE DIGIT

11/2 Those are the odds given for Tiger Woods to win the 2012 Masters, according to **sportsinteraction.com**.

What the Hines?

Here's a surefire way to tell the next Batman movie is complete and utter fantasy: Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Hines Ward makes an appearance—and he scores a touchdown! Everybody knows that doesn't happen anymore. The trailer for "The Dark Knight Rises" was leaked on the Internet over the weekend.

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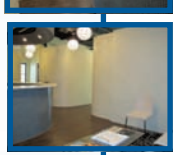

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ROMANCE PLANET

BY JENNIFER SHEPHERD | READ MORE AT LIPSTICKMYSTIC.COM

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21

People are telling you what to do and what not to do, and it's driving you insane. Mercury is inspiring you to scream until it stops. If your current romantic partnership becomes a casualty of war, then so be it.

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19

With the sun entering your sign, you're experiencing your personal New Year. Although 2011 was pretty crazy, you learned a lot about what turns you on and off. Share this information with a sweetheart who appreciates honesty.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You're so distracted by a hot new flirtation that you're finding it impossible to focus on work, holiday shopping or travel arrangements. You just want to spend all your time indulging in sexy fun with that gorgeous new friend.

Pisces
Feb. 19-March 20

Jupiter is reminding you of your long-term ambitions. You want to take over the world, launch a business or find true love, and you won't settle for anything less. Focus on making great stuff happen as you head into 2012.

Aries
March 21-April 19

With Saturn opposite your sign, you're becoming obsessed with the idea of enacting justice. If you're still mad at a former flame, you'll plot devious ways to get back at him or her. But is sending a bunch of dead roses a good idea? Rise above it.

Taurus
April 20-May 20

As Jupiter prepares to go direct in your sign after months in retrograde, sanity will return. You'll realize that marrying that stripper probably wasn't the smartest thing you've ever done.

Gemini
May 21-June 21

Two planets are making it hard for you to get any action this week. Every time you try to say something seductive, it comes out super creepy instead of sexy.

Cancer
June 22-July 22

With a pile-up of planets opposite your sign, you're ready to curl up in a ball and remain motionless until about 2013. The good news? Your love life will get better. The bad news? It won't happen right away.

Leo
July 23-Aug. 22

Venus is reminding you that there's a whole world of sexy prospects out there. Don't keep dating the same types of people. If you usually love dumb jocks, hang out with a brainy nerd for a while.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22

The sun will help you gain insight about your tortured romantic situation. Finally, you'll see why falling in love with married guys or wasting money on immature girls is not a winning plan. Write down your smart thoughts so you don't forget them.

Libra
Sept. 23-Oct. 23

As a romantic Air sign, you're rarely without a partner. But this week, being without a partner might actually be a good thing. Venus is urging you to take some time by yourself.

Scorpio
Oct. 24-Nov. 21

A bouncy moon is making you sexually adventurous. You'll experiment with different positions in the bedroom or try out some unusual role-playing with your honey.

CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

Monday
« Jake Gyllenhaal is 31.
» Alyssa Milano is 39.

Tuesday
» Jonah Hill is 28.

Wednesday
» Blackhawks' Steve Montador is 32.
» Andy Dick is 46.

Friday
» Holly Madison is 32.
» Susan Lucci is 65

Saturday
» Ryan Seacrest is 36.
» Ricky Martin is 40.

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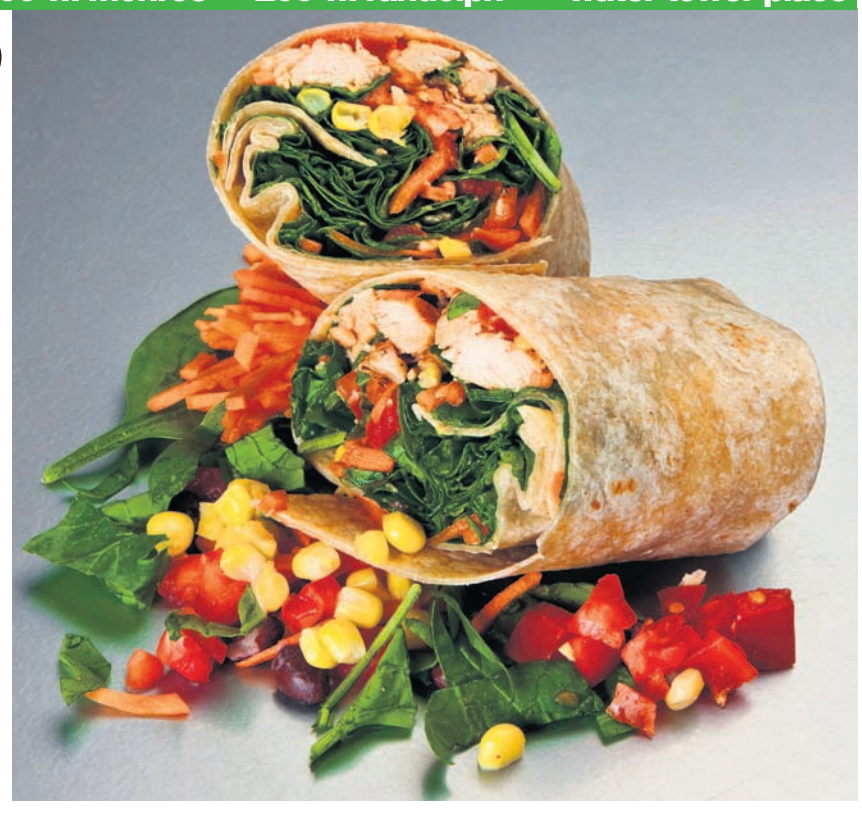

BEST TV CHARACTER TOURNAMENT

Clay Morrow brought a little SAMCRO justice down on Neal Caffrey in the Round of 16 in RedEye's fourth Best TV Character Tournament, but only after a tough battle. The "Sons of Anarchy" character played by Ron Perlman barely defeated the "White Collar" con man (Matt Bomer), taking 51 percent of the 4,834 votes cast in that race. You can vote in the quarterfinals until 5 p.m. Tuesday at **showpatroltv.com**. CURT WAGNER, REDEYE

DRAMA

Walter Bishop, "Fringe"
vs.
Daryl Dixon, "The Walking Dead"

Clay Morrow, "Sons of Anarchy"
vs.
Rory Williams, "Doctor Who"

COMEDY

Charlie Kelly, "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia"
vs.
Louie, "Louie"

Barney Stinson, "How I Met Your Mother"
vs.
Abed Nadir, "Community"

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Seriously, like, a poll says people hate these words, you know?

38%

Reuters

Do you want to kill a conversation? Try saying "whatever."

Words like "you know" and "like" might be irritating to hear, but for the third year in a row, it's "whatever" that holds the most power to annoy, according to an annual survey by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion.

Nearly four in 10 adults named "whatever" as the most annoying verbal filler in casual conversation, while one in five adults had similar disdain for "like" and "you know." "Just sayin' " and "seriously" were more forgiving to the ears, though still quite irritating, Marist found.

The telephone survey of 1,026 adults nationally had a margin of error of three percentage points.

Year's worst

Which one of the following words or phrases do you find most annoying in conversation?

38%: Whatever
20%: Like
19%: You know
11%: Just sayin'
7%: Seriously
5%: Unsure

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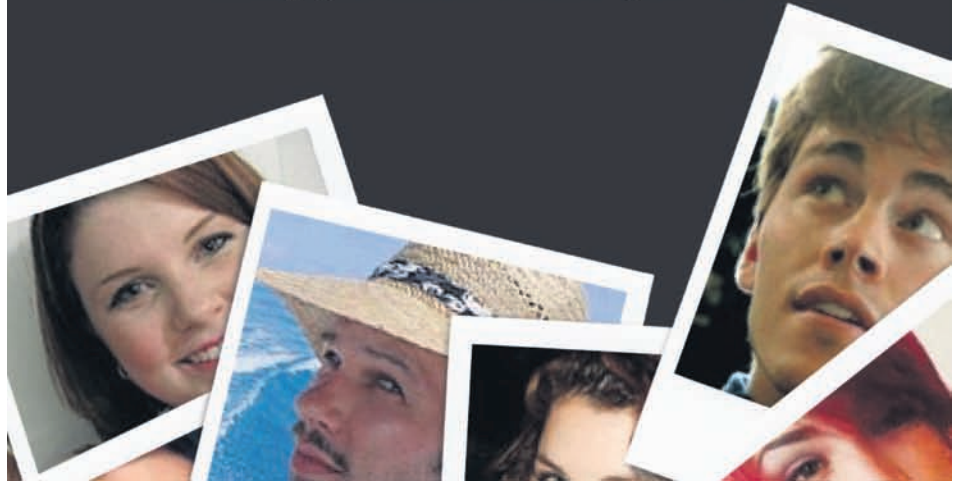

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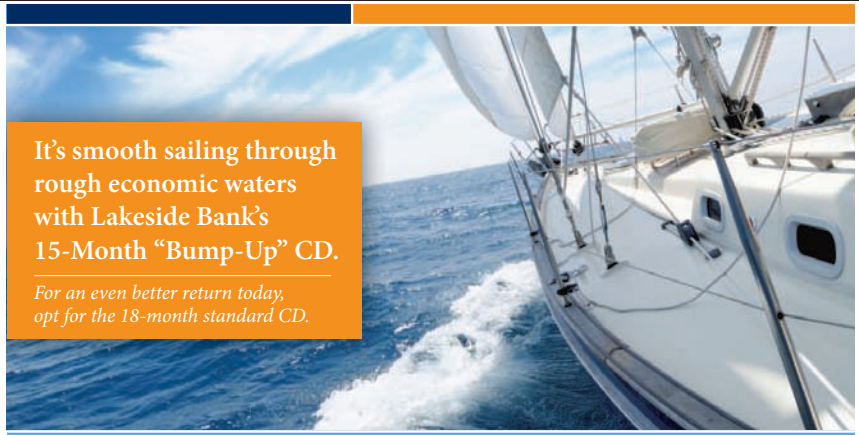

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CHICAGO $250 DOWN
5721 SOUTH ABERDEEN SFH
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Residential For Sale–North

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1420 SHERIDAN RD. CONDO
Northshore Luxury Building On The Lake
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Residential For Sale–NW

CHAIN O LAKES $117900 CB027234
26199 HEART O LAKES SFH
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TREMPLEAU COUNTY, WI $218000 CB027249
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Residential For Rent–City Central/Loop

GOLD COAST $2650 WEBCB319091
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1/2 Block from Lake and Water Tower Place Features include roof deck, conference room, exercise room, storage, garage, AC, 24hr doorman. Heat included. Close to everything.
2BR $2650
312-642-2860

Residential For Rent–City South

AUBURN $1200 CB027272

8824 S. PRINCETON SFH
Chicago, 8824 S. Princeton, Gorgeous, Rehabbed 4br, w/hdwd Flr, Fence Yard, & Finish Bsmt. $1,200/mo. Sec 8 welcomed 240 273-2654. Close to train station and shopping center. arobin8462@yahoo.com

HYDE PARK/GARFIELD PARK $1200/MO. CB323604
6504 S MINERVA CONDO
3BR/2BA. Beautiful, remodeled. Clean, private building with laundry room. Low-traffic street. Small pets ok. 708-743-4061

HYDE PARK $850 CB320308
5035 S DREXEL TOWNHOUSE
2BR/1.5BA. Unfinished basement, assigned parking. $850 +sec.+2 mos util. 847-934-6642

Residential For Rent–Northwest

ARLINGTON HTS $1550.00 CB026093
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3BR 2BA 3C Gar AC W/D remod. Kitchen,dishwsr,Hdwd Floors Full Bsmt $1550/Mo + Sec. 847-259-4632

SCHAUMBURG $1160/MO. CB330910
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Residential For Rent–S/SW

CRESTWOOD, IL $1500/MO CB326150
14137 KILPATRICK SFH
3BR/2BA, 2 car garage, Finished lower level family room. $1500/ month plus security. 708-799-9393

PARK FOREST, IL $1400/MO. CB329347
WINNEBAGO & CENTRAL SFH
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WRIGLEYVILLE $1,015 CB027320

951 W. CORNELIA - 2A APT
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CHICAGO $110/WK CB330823
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CHICAGO $450 CB327049
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EDGEWATER $995/MO. CB310557
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NORTH CENTER $700/MO. CB328125
2345 W IRVING PARK APARTMENT
1BR, heat, cooking gas, hot water incl. Separate living and dining room. No dogs. Laundry in bldg. Close to train and L. 773-908-6241/773-478-6666

Apt for Rent–City Northwest

BELMONT/PULASKI $725 CB327774
4112 W WELLINGTON APARTMENT
2BR, recently remodeled, enclosed porch, laundry facilities, storage area, close to public trans. Call 773-983-4271.

Chicago $850/mo. CB315915
Old Irving Park Apartment
Newly Remodeled 2 Bedroom Apt. Heat & Appliances included with parking. Near Blue line. **$850/mo. Call 773-736-8341**

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Large 1BR, hw floors, heat included, living & dining room, laundry in building. 1st floor, close to blue line. 773-736-8341

Apt For Rent–City West

CHICAGO $105/WK WEBCB327171
AUSTIN ROOM FOR RE
Clean Room with Refrigerator and Microwave. Near Oak Park, Wal-Mart, Bus & Metra.
773-637-5957

CHICAGO $725 CB317469
2709 OAK PARK AVE APT
Oak Park Ave & Diversey. 1BR, 2nd fl, heat & cooking gas incl, newly decorated. 630-768-4524

CHICAGO CB326040
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ASHBURN $825.00 CB027277
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Apt For Rent–West

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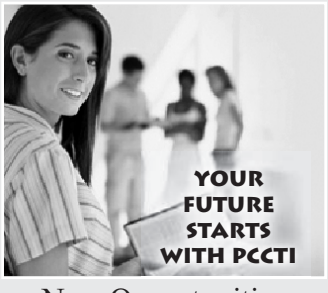

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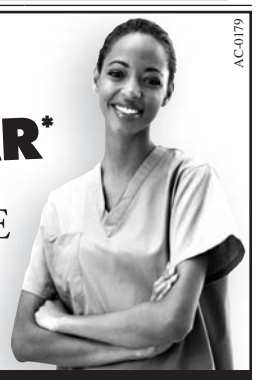

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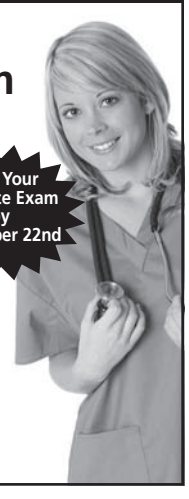

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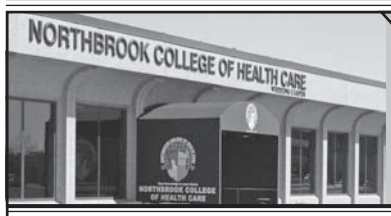

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

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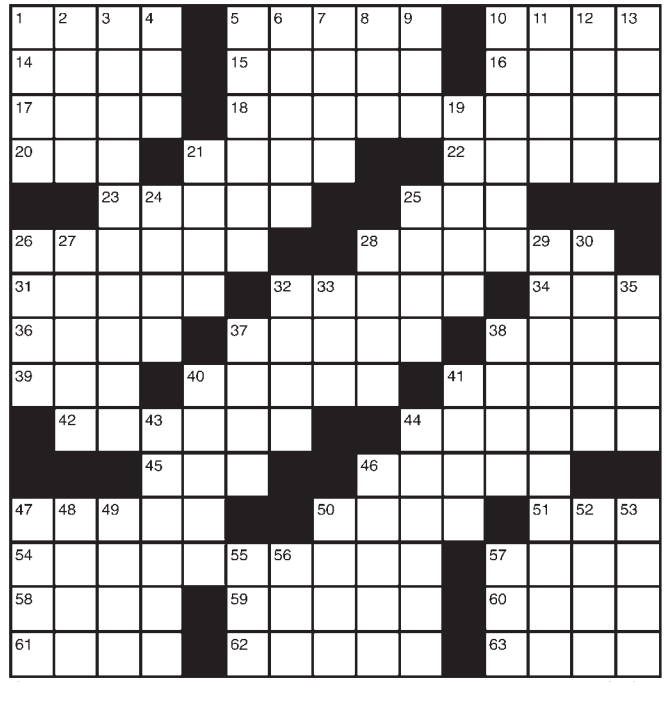
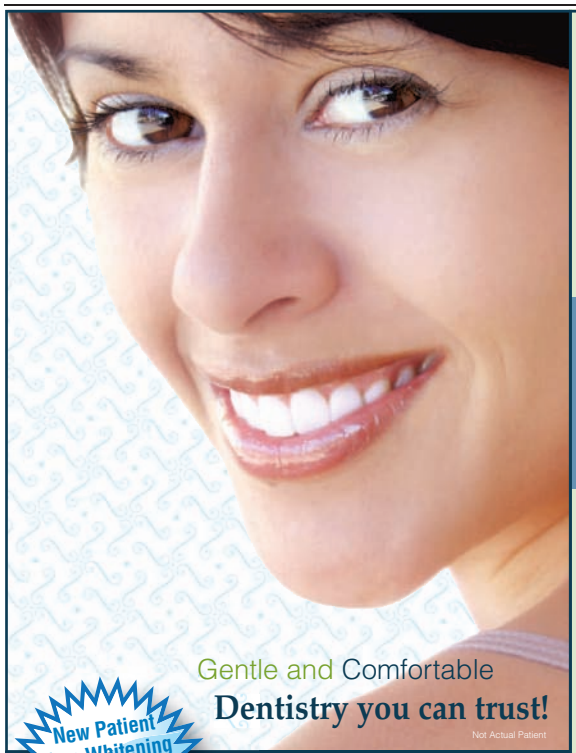
TODAY IN THE YEAR ...

1843: "A Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens, was first published in England.
1996: The TV industry unveiled a plan to rate programs using tags such as "TV-G," "TV-Y" and "TV-M."
1998: President Bill Clinton was impeached by the Republican-controlled House for perjury and obstruction of justice. (He was later acquitted by the Senate.)
2001: The fires that had burned beneath the ruins of the World Trade Center in New York City for the previous three months were declared extinguished except for a few scattered hot spots.



ACROSS
1 __ jacket; book cover
5 Usual practice
10 In __; lined up
14 Run __; meet
15 Slip away from
16 France's Coty
17 Actor Sandler
18 Rest; leisure
20 Journal
21 Thyme or dill
22 In the __ of; surrounded by
23 "Casper the Friendly __"
25 __-man; toady
26 __ of evolution; Darwin's idea
28 Tenant
31 Moses' brother
32 Wide
34 Sweet potato
36 Bad mood
37 In a __; instantly
38 Singer Seeger
39 __-Tiki; Thor Heyerdahl's raft
40 Measuring instrument
41 Baked, donut-shaped roll
42 Set on fire
44 Constructs
45 TV's "__ Got a Secret"
46 Reed or Fargo
47 Elbow room
50 Went under
51 Jacuzzi
54 Causing to be unfriendly
57 Consumer
58 Collapsed
59 Instrument for Liberace
60 Chair or pew
61 Not difficult
62 Awards for TV shows & actors
63 Invites

DOWN
1 Radio knob
2 Disassemble
3 Walking unsteadily
4 Actor Selleck
5 Doctrinal opposition
6 On one's toes
7 Light __; lamp insertion
8 Actress Lupino
9 __-Mex; cuisine of the Southwest
10 Painter
11 Actor Tim __
12 Yoko & others
13 __ away; left
19 Make right
21 Antler
24 Owl's comment
25 Slangy reply
26 Chore
27 Capital of Vietnam
28 Late Kennedy matriarch
29 Contact lens alternatives
30 X-__; smutty
32 Depressed
33 Cleaning cloth
35 Tillis & Gibson
37 Kismet
38 __ in the neck; nuisance
40 Thing assumed
41 "Nonsense!"
43 Pleasantly
44 Small drums
46 Marlo's dad
47 Out of danger
48 Request
49 Feels sick
50 Thailand, once
52 Mountaintop
53 Painting, etc.
55 Gorilla
56 Curry or Daly
57 Nation in North America: abbr.



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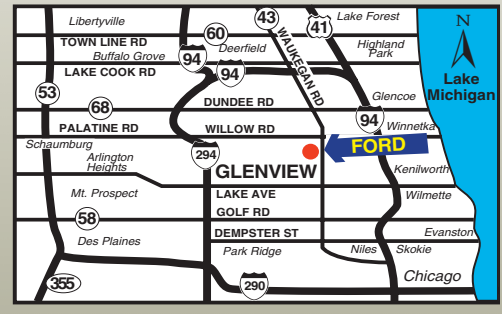

whoville

IN THE THICKE OF IT

ABOUT LAST NIGHT
Luis Gomez
» lgomez@tribune.com
» @aboutluisgomez

Robin Thicke claimed he needed a nap at the end of his visit to Chicago on Tuesday—one of many stops on his promotional tour for his new album, "Love After War"—but you wouldn't have known it from looking at him.

Thicke's trademark poof hairstyle was perfectly in place during his in-studio visit to WGCI 107.5-FM, and any bags under his blue eyes from a lack of sleep were hidden behind large, designer shades. Thicke said he would have taken them off if not for the fact that the interview was being filmed for WGCI's website.

"On camera, the glasses stay on," Thicke, 34, announced to the room before joking, "These are medicinal ..."

Thicke has learned to embrace his sense of humor—even if it means no longer being seen as a serious artist.

"I never used to tell jokes on stage," Thicke told WGCI's DJ MoonDawg. "Now I'm cutting up jokes all night long."

Before he could head to the airport, Thicke had one more appearance to make in the building: a meet-and-greet with V103 listeners. He'd performed the night before at The Mid in West Town and canceled a show in Philadelphia days earlier to rest his voice, but he still agreed to sing a song during the V103 appearance.

Of course, the fans wanted more.

"I would love to, but my voice is ripped to shreds right now," Thicke said, before abruptly changing his mind. "You know what? Let's try it. I hate not giving the people what they want."

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Robin Thicke at radio station V103
PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE

"I try to at least wear jeans at home. If I put on sweatpants, my wife goes: 'No sweatpants. You're not going to get [any] tonight if you wear sweatpants.' I also try to comb my hair a little bit. She's looking at Brad Pitt and all these other guys, and they're looking good, so I've got to look good."

—**Robin Thicke**, on trying to look sharp even at home

SIGHTINGS

» Pop star **Joe Jonas** partied at Board Room until the early hours of Saturday.

» The Bears' **Lance Briggs** and the Bulls' **Joakim Noah** were also on hand at Board Room that night.

» "The Rosie Show" staff holiday party took place at Roof at the Wit hotel Wednesday and featured an appearance by **Rosie O'Donnell** herself.

» **O'Donnell** and director/actress **Penny Marshall** had dinner at Chicago Cut Steakhouse on Monday.

» Cubs President of Baseball Operations **Theo Epstein** and a friend dined at Mon Ami Gabi in Lincoln Park on Wednesday.

» **Epstein** and Cubs owners **Tom and Todd Ricketts** hung out at Butch McGuire's in the Gold Coast on Thursday.

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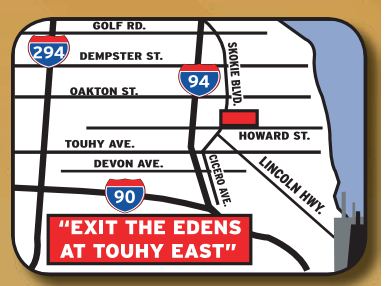

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red hot

Hot commodity

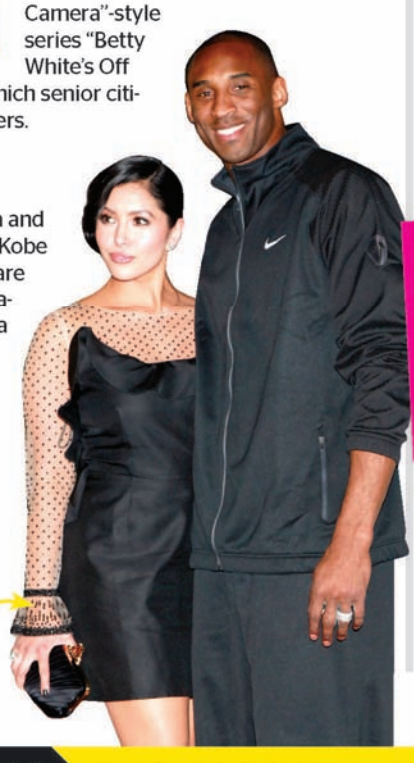
Sounds like Playboy is getting its money's worth out of Lindsay Lohan and the $1 million it reportedly paid her to pose nude. Hugh Hefner posted on his Twitter account Sunday that the issue featuring LiLo is "breaking sales records." (Playboy hasn't released any official numbers.) That should make her feel better when she's performing community service in the vicinity of dead bodies.

Bettypalooza

Prepare for a White-out on NBC on Jan. 16. The network will pay tribute to actress **Betty White** with a two-hour block that combines a celebration of her 90th birthday and a sneak peek at her "Candid Camera"-style series "Betty White's Off Their Rockers," in which senior citizens prank youngsters.

On the D-list

After years of drama and rumors of infidelity, Kobe Bryant and his wife are splitsville. Divorce papers filed by Vanessa Bryant on Friday in Orange County Superior Court suggest she and Bryant had been negotiating the terms of their split for some time. The couple reportedly had no prenuptial agreement.



Vanessa and Kobe Bryant

Jason Trawick and Britney Spears
GETTY IMAGES

Engaged!

Britney Spears is engaged again, y'all! Her fiance, Jason Trawick, popped the question Thursday night, **people.com** reports, with a Neil Lane-designed sparkler with 90 small round diamonds ringing the entire platinum band—and one big round rock in the middle. The couple celebrated Trawick's 40th birthday the next day in—where else?—Las Vegas. Spears tweeted: "Tonight was one of the most magical nights of my life. Such an amazing time with my new fiancé and our closest friends and family."

THE DIGITS

$40 million

The estimated amount "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows" brought in this weekend, falling short of the studio's projection of a $55 million opening weekend.

Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi

$12 million

Price tag of the Malibu, Calif., mansion that Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi bought from Brad Pitt, **usweekly.com** reports. Pitt bought the mansion in 2005 after he and Jennifer Aniston split.

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Age of Brad **Pitt.** The other half of Brangelina celebrated his birthday Sunday with Angie and the kids in Las Vegas.

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